

## TEACHER WORKSHEET 4.1

### Planning Template for the First Day of School

Although not all of these items may be applicable to your class and to your students, this template can give you some idea of how you will want to plan for your first day.

Opening exercise (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Supplies, materials, books to be issued (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Student information forms and inventories to be used (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Rules, policies, procedures (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Introduction of self (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Welcome activity (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Forms to be sent home (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Fees to be collected (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Icebreaker (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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Lesson (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

Teacher input:

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Student activity:

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Closing (Time allotted: \_\_\_\_\_):

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## Learn Your Students' Names Quickly

Learning how to correctly pronounce and spell your students' names is one of the most important tasks you will have to master as the school term begins. Being able to call all of your students by name is an important step in getting to know them as people and in managing your class.

The depth of resentment that mispronouncing or misspelling a student's name can cause is often surprising to first-year teachers. Although teachers may think of it as a small mistake, students tend to view teachers who do not call them by the right name as uncaring and insensitive.

Learning all of your students' names on the first or second day of school is not very difficult. These quick tips will make it possible for you to go home on the first day of school confident that you know the students in your class well enough to get the term off to a good start:

- Put in some preliminary work! Organize your seating charts, study class rosters, and prepare name tag materials.
- Make sure that your students each sit in their assigned seat for the first few days so that you can more quickly associate names with faces.
- If you have students fill out a student information form, when you read what your students have written, mentally match their face to the information in front of you.
- While students are working on a first-day writing assignment, walk quietly around the room, checking the roster.
- Ask each student to say his or her name for you. Repeat it as you study the child's face.
- Mark pronunciation notes on your roll sheet. Also, make notes to help you match names to students. For example, you can write "big smile" or "very tall" next to a student's name. These little clues will help you when you are struggling to recall a name on the second day of school. Make sure that you pay attention to characteristics that are not likely to change, such as height or hair color.
- Take photos of your students in their assigned seats and then study the photos at home later to help you match names and faces.
- When you cannot recall a child's name, admit it, and ask for help. When you hear it again, write it down, repeat it, and try again until you can recall it.

## How to Get to Know Your Students

Getting to know your students as quickly as you can is extremely important. Although getting to know each child will take time, there are many ways to obtain the background information you need.

One way to get information is to review your students' records. Be sure to follow the correct procedures and confidentiality regulations. You may want to jot quick notes on each student as you scan his or her folder.

When you make a positive phone call to a student's parent or guardian, you have a wonderful opportunity to ask about his or her child. Likewise, when you send home an introductory letter, you can add a section asking parents or guardians to tell you about their child.

You can also learn a great deal about your students from writing assignments in which students respond to classroom issues.

Your students' previous teachers may be another good source of information. One drawback of this method is that you may sometimes get information that is not completely objective and that may bias your view of a child. Ask for information about students from their previous teachers only if they strike you as fair-minded professionals. If you find yourself listening to unfair horror stories about how much a student misbehaved in previous years, you should politely excuse yourself from the conversation.

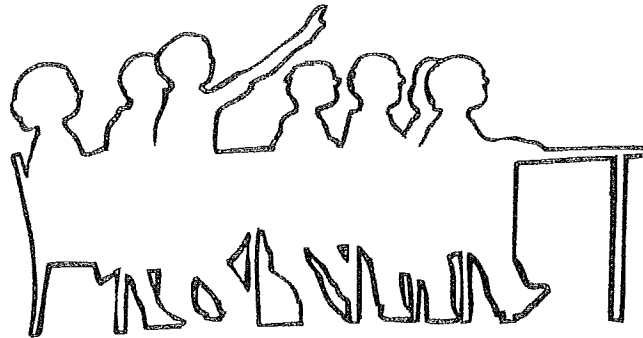
One of the best ways to get to know your students and to help them get to know each other is to use icebreakers. As you watch students interact with each other, you will learn a great deal about them. In addition, icebreakers will give your students an opportunity to learn to value each other's contributions to the class. Try these strategies to get your students off to a good start:

- Have students work in pairs or triads to fill out information forms on each other. Include questions that will cause them to learn interesting and unusual details about each other. For example, having students list their favorite performers or athletes or a pet peeve is a good conversation starter.
- Try playing a chaining game in which students try to recite everyone's last name without having to stop to think. You can even offer a small reward for the first student who is able to do this.
- Pass around a large calendar on which each student can record his or her birthday. Also consider having students mark their birthplace on a large map.
- Create a class newsletter during the first week of class. Have students share a variety of ideas as they interview each other for articles in the newsletter. You can include almost anything you and your students might enjoy—for example, cartoons, interviews with parents or guardians or administrators, advice, predictions, or tips for studying.
- Create a duty roster for the classroom tasks that students can manage well. Sharing tasks will encourage students to work together to take ownership of the class.
- Take photographs of your students and post them later in the week. Ask students to bring in photographs from when they were much younger, and post these, too.
- Have each student find a quotation about school success and bring it to class. Post the quotes around your classroom to inspire all of your students.

- Have students create a time capsule to commemorate their first day in your class. Have them write a brief description of the first day with you. Ask questions to elicit responses that reveal personal impressions, predictions, and reactions. Gather these and place them in a container that you will keep sealed until a future date when you will share its contents with students.
- Hand students half sheets of paper and ask them to write three interesting things about themselves without stating their name or obvious characteristics. Have students ball up the sheets before dropping them into a large container. Shake the container to scramble the balled-up sheets. Distribute them randomly to each student. Give students three minutes to try to match their classmates with the information.
- If you have received your class rosters early, use a Web site, such as Discovery Education ([www.puzzlemaker.com](http://www.puzzlemaker.com)), to create a puzzle from your students' names.
- Put students in pairs. Give each pair a blank Venn diagram; have them chart how they are alike and different. After the initial pairs have completed the diagram, each pair should then join another pair and create another Venn diagram that shows how the pairs are alike and different.
- Have each student create a time line of his or her life. If you let students use large sheets of bulletin board paper and bright markers, you will be able to decorate your classroom with work that students will find fascinating.
- Have students group themselves according to birthday, eye color, favorite sports team, favorite music, or other common interests.
- Create a blank bingo grid and make copies for all of your students. In addition, print out a list of your students' names and make copies for all students. Ask students to fill in the grids with each other's names in random order. Play several rounds of bingo, choosing names randomly, until your students know each other's names. A variation on this game is to place interests, hobbies, talents, or other positive student characteristics in the grids.
- Check out the Ice Breakers Web site ([www.icebreakers.us](http://www.icebreakers.us)). This informative and interesting site contains a lengthy list of icebreakers. Although most are for adults, teachers can adapt many of them to use with their students.
- Ask your students to list ten things they do well. You will be surprised at how difficult this is for many students; too often, students focus on their weaknesses, not on their strengths.
- Put students into small groups and hand each group a bag with several common objects in it. Relate these objects to your discipline, if possible. Ask students to combine these objects in a new way. They can then name their invention and create a marketing plan for it. The point of this exercise is not just for you to learn about your students but also to have them work together in a way that forces them to think creatively.

- Group students into teams to create a cartoon panel that illustrates a topic related to school success. They can use stick figures to tell the story or generate a story line that uses the members of the group as characters.
- Place students in pairs and have them interview each other. A twist that makes this assignment interesting is to give each student an object and ask what he or she has in common with it. When your students present their findings to the class, you will learn a lot about them as they reveal how they are like paper clips, bookmarks, tissue boxes, or other common classroom items.
- Ask students to write descriptive paragraphs about each other. Photocopy these paragraphs and bind them into booklets for all students. This will be the most intently read document that you will give your students all term.
- Put your students into pairs and have them determine ten things they have in common. Insist that they go beyond the obvious to discuss such topics as shared experiences, attitudes, or aspirations, or other appealing topics.

In addition to the preceding suggestions, student inventories, mentioned earlier, are a good way to learn information about your students that you do not have time to learn in any other way. Many teachers ask students to fill out an inventory during the first few days of school. Still others find that if they wait a few days, their students will feel secure enough to reveal more information. Whenever you decide to use an inventory, be sure to give your students plenty of time to answer thoughtfully. Student Worksheets 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 provide three inventories that you can reproduce for your students.



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## STUDENT WORKSHEET 4.2

### Inventory for Elementary Students

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My birthday is \_\_\_\_\_

My family members are

\_\_\_\_\_

When I grow up I want to be

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite things to do at home are

\_\_\_\_\_

My special friends are

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite things to do at school are

\_\_\_\_\_

The subjects I do best in are

\_\_\_\_\_

The subjects I need help in are

\_\_\_\_\_

If I could change anything about school, it would be

\_\_\_\_\_

This year I am looking forward to learning about

\_\_\_\_\_

I like it when my teachers

\_\_\_\_\_

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I would like to know more about

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I am happiest when I am

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**STUDENT WORKSHEET 4.3**

**Inventory for Middle School Students**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My birthday is \_\_\_\_\_

My family members are  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When I grow up I want to be  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My closest friends are  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite things to do are  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Here are my favorites:

Radio station: _____	Magazine: _____
Sport: _____	Hobby: _____
Book: _____	Movie: _____
Music: _____	Video game: _____

One thing people don't know about me is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A skill I have is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A person I admire is \_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Something I would like to learn to do better is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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I appreciate it when a teacher

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My previous teachers would tell you this about me:

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I am proud of myself when I

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**STUDENT WORKSHEET 4.4**

**Inventory for High School Students**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My birthday is \_\_\_\_\_

My family members are

\_\_\_\_\_

After graduation I plan to

\_\_\_\_\_

My greatest asset is

\_\_\_\_\_

I am an expert on

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing people don't know about me is

\_\_\_\_\_

My teachers from last year will tell you that I am

\_\_\_\_\_

I have trouble dealing with

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite class is

\_\_\_\_\_

The most influential person in my life is \_\_\_\_\_ because

\_\_\_\_\_

It was difficult for me to learn

\_\_\_\_\_

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It was easy for me to learn

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I want to know more about

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Three words that describe my personality are

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One lesson I had to learn the hard way is

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accustomed to the routines and expectations for their class, they will find it easy to remain on task because the work itself will drive instruction. Here are some of the management tips that can make creating a differentiated classroom a workable solution to how you will accommodate the needs of all of your students:

- Encourage classroom ownership and a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the entire class. Ask students to self-evaluate, make informed decisions for the good of the group, articulate their learning goals, and help each other be successful.
- Always begin and end class with a common activity that all can enjoy and learn from.
- Appoint student experts who can help their peers.
- Have clear, written directions for all activities so that students know what to do. Many teachers find that checklists and daily agendas are effective in making assignments and expectations clear.
- Establish clear timelines for assignments so that students know that they are expected to produce work within a set period of time. This will help everyone stay focused.
- Post a list of procedures for those students who finish early. Provide plenty of high-interest, independent work for these students.
- Use signals to control noise—even good noise can get too loud sometimes.
- Establish class routines for turning in work, passing out materials, moving to groups, and so on.
- Keep the pace brisk, businesslike, and purposeful.

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOMS

- **Choice boards.** With a choice board, students are given a menu of possible tasks to accomplish. This is a structured way to allow for student choice.
- **Alphabet boxes.** Students are given a grid of squares with a letter of the alphabet in each square. They then brainstorm and recall words, ideas, and concepts related to a unit. For example, in an alphabet box for a unit on global warming, a student would write “Polar bears endangered” in the *P* box, “Ozone” in the *O* box, and so on for every letter.
- **Dialectical journals.** Students write two-column notes about information they read or hear. In one column, they are given or select a topic to write about, and in the other, they write a response to the topic.
- **Write-pair-shares.** In a write-pair-share, students write a response to a question. They then share their response with a partner first and with the entire group afterward.

- **Audio materials.** For students who are auditory learners, audio materials offer another approach to learning. Students listen to recorded materials as they read or instead of reading. Audio materials can be used to study, review, or introduce information, and in many other ways.
- **Vocabulary charades.** Students work in triads to act out vocabulary words and definitions. This also works well for reviewing key terms and facts in a unit of study.
- **Artifact boxes.** Items from a unit of study are displayed in a box for students to use to analyze and predict information. An artifact box may be used for enrichment, teaching, or remediation.
- **Case studies.** Students investigate real-life situations through reports, articles, and other observations. They complete their investigations in cooperative groups.
- **Chalk talks.** Five students go to the board and stand so that they cannot see each other's writing. The teacher calls out a topic and has everyone in the class write about it for one minute. Students discuss the work of the five chalk writers and compare it to the work of their classmates.
- **Exit slips.** Before leaving class, students write responses to questions about what they learned in class that day. They can also record information about what they still need to learn and what remaining questions or concerns they have.
- **Clickers.** Students use handheld devices to answer questions electronically.
- **Agendas.** Students are offered individualized personal checklists of work to complete within a set period of time—usually a week or so. Although students may have some assignments in common, agendas allow for differentiation by offering work that is less or more challenging while appealing to diverse learning style preferences.
- **Chunking.** Assignments are broken into smaller, more manageable parts, with structured directions offered for each part.
- **Hot Potato.** Similar to the Tingo Tango game later in this list, each student has a note card with a question about the lesson on it. Learners trade their cards as quickly as possible for thirty seconds. When time is called, each student will have to answer the question on his or her card either in writing or orally.
- **Task cards.** Because of the various activities possible in one differentiated class, students read explicit directions for an activity instead of hearing a quick flurry of verbal directions at the start of class. They can then refer to the directions as class progresses.
- **Interactive bookmarks.** Students use premade bookmarks specific to a unit of material to record notes, answer questions, define words, and make observations as they read.
- **Minilessons.** Students are given brief lessons designed to target specific areas for remediation or enrichment.

- **Jigsaws.** Students in a group divide the material to be studied into various sections. Each group member becomes an expert on his or her section and teaches it to the others.
- **One-sentence summaries.** Students write a quick summary of a passage, procedure, or other new learning.
- **Learning circles.** Students gather to discuss a piece of literature or a reading passage in depth. The concept can be applied to reading of all sorts and to working out common problems in math or science courses.
- **Manipulatives.** Hands-on activities can be used to help students in all disciplines learn. From science labs to word sorts, manipulatives benefit the tactile learner in that he or she is able to associate movement and the material to be learned.
- **Open-ended problems.** Students solve open-ended problems periodically throughout a unit of study. For example, during a unit about the American Revolution, students might be asked to view portraits of the leaders of the day and make predictions about their social status based on clues in the paintings.
- **Save the Last Word.** As students read, they write down words, phrases, or sentences that catch their attention. Once they have completed the reading, students share their choices in small groups. The other members of the group react to what was shared. The student who wrote the material then has the last word about why the choices were significant.
- **Sticky note note taking.** Students write brief notes on sticky notes as they work or read.
- **Note checks.** Students review and highlight each other's notes.
- **Roundtables.** Students discuss their work by sitting in a circle and taking turns. This works best if they have had time to write questions, concerns, or responses to a question first.
- **Online collaboration.** Students work together to create and post blogs or to collaborate with other students in activities involving podcasts, virtual projects, tweets, or wikis.
- **Paper discussions.** Small groups of students are seated in circles. Each group is handed a sheet of paper, and one student in each group writes a response to a question or idea pertaining to a topic. That student then passes the sheet to the next student, who adds to the response and passes it to the next student, and so on as quickly as possible in a specified time limit.
- **Student observations.** Students watch video clips or live demonstrations and record and share their observations.
- **Shaping-Up Review.** Students write the four main points of the day's lesson on the corners of a square, one thing they loved inside a heart, three questions they have on the three points of a triangle, and one thing they can apply in another way inside a circle.

- **Tingo Tango.** Students stand in a circle rapidly passing a soft ball around the circle as the teacher repeatedly says, “Tingo.” At random intervals, the teacher say “Tango” instead of “Tingo.” The student holding the ball at that point has to answer a question or call out a fact.
- **Two-minute questions.** The teacher poses a question and gives students two minutes to write responses before sharing with group members, the entire class, or a study buddy.
- **Word splashes.** Students generate a list of words associated with a particular unit of study before beginning the unit to increase background knowledge. Students can also be given a list of words to be alert for as they begin studying.

## RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

In the broadest sense, Response to Intervention (RTI) is a form of differentiated instruction in that it offers modifications to content, process, and product to help students master curriculum material. Although RTI is now a highly successful program in many schools, it differs from classroom differentiation in a significant way: RTI is a schoolwide intervention framework instead of differentiation delivered by an individual teacher.

Similar to other types of differentiated instruction, RTI offers a tiered approach to interventions. In the first tier, students are instructed by a general education teacher using solid, classroom-tested strategies, including differentiated instruction. Ongoing data collection through a variety of assessments is used to help determine the needs of all students in the class.

Students who, according to the collected data, are not mastering the content or acquiring the necessary skills required by the curriculum are moved to the second tier of instruction. Students in the second tier continue to remain in their general education classroom and receive the same instruction as their classmates. In addition, however, students in the second tier also receive more intensive instruction targeted to help them overcome their learning difficulties. Such instruction is usually delivered in small-group format, in learning centers, and even by an additional staff member. After a specified time limit, if students in the second tier have mastered the material, they then move back to the first tier of instruction. If they are still experiencing difficulties, they move to the third tier.

Students in the third tier receive instruction that is more intensive and individualized than that offered in the first two tiers. Often this instruction is provided on an individual basis by a specialist or a special education teacher, although the general education teacher can still be involved. Instruction is specifically targeted to assist individual students. Ongoing assessments at this level continue to play an important role, as students may be referred to a screening committee that will consider them for eligibility for special education services.

Although there may be experts at your school who are already involved in an RTI program and who can assist you in learning more about it, there are also two very good sites where you can access much more information: